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## **Testimony for the County Council Budget Hearing April 11, 2023**

### **After School Program for ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages) Students**

Good afternoon council members and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Jacqueline Guevara and I live in Rockville. When I arrived in the United States, my daughter was 11 years old and did not speak English, we had to adapt to the new education system and in that process, we faced several challenges. One of these was the ESOL program that, initially, helped her integrate into the education system, but that also harmed her, because she was assigned to low level Mathematic course just because she was part of the ESOL program. This made me stay alert and start advocating for my daughter so that she could access a quality education and be prepared to continue her university studies, which is the goal of every parent and student.

Based on this experience and having observed:

- Hispanic students stuck in low level courses,
- Students who do not have the required English and Mathematics level to enter college, and
- ESOL students falling behind compared to other students.

I request funds for an after-school program for ESOL students. This program will have as a goal to improve academic performance and close the gaps in opportunities for access to quality education. It would give students the opportunity to spend less time at ESOL, allowing them to access regular, honor, and AP classes. In this way we would have students better prepared, motivated, competitive, and ready to access universities.

This program could achieve success for ESOL students and remove the barriers they currently face. An after-school program would elevate the level of education in this group of students, who are mostly Hispanic and low-income.

According to USA Today, by 2030, Hispanic students in the United States will number approximately 14 million, and according to data from the Pew Research Center in 2021, only 23% of Hispanics achieved a college degree. This is the lowest percentage with reference to the other ethnicities of students.

In conclusion, the goal of an after-school program for ESOL students is to successfully prepare students so they have an opportunity to graduate from college. We are in competitive times and the Hispanic population that is entering the education system is growing faster than any other population in the United States. This new generation of Latinos is going to be part of the U.S. labor system, and their performance will have an impact on the U.S. economy and society.